

ESL Material Evaluation: The Missing Link in Nigerian Classrooms

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Abstract : The paper is a pre-use evaluation of grammar activities in three primary English course books (two of which are international primary English course books and the other a popular Nigerian primary English course book). The titles are - Cambridge Global English, Collins International Primary English, and Nigeria Primary English - Primary English. Grammar points and grammar activities in the three-course books were identified, grouped, and evaluated. The grammar activity which was most common in the course books, simple past tense, was chosen for evaluation, and the units which present simple past tense activities were selected to evaluate the extent to which the treatment of simple past tense in each of the course books help the young learners of English as a second language in Nigeria, aged 8 - 11, level A1 to A2, who lack the basic grammatical knowledge, to know grammar/communicate effectively. A bespoke checklist was devised, through the modification of existing checklists for the purpose of the evaluation, to evaluate the extent to which the grammar activities promote the communicative effectiveness of Nigerian learners of English as a second language. The results of the evaluation and the analysis of the data reveal that the treatment of grammar, especially the treatment of the simple past tense, is evidently insufficient. While Cambridge Global English's, and Collins International Primary English's treatment of grammar, the simple past tense, is underpinned by state-of-the-art theories of learning, language learning theories, second language learning principles, second language curriculum-syllabus design principles, grammar learning and teaching theories, the grammar load is insignificantly low, and the grammar tasks do not promote creative grammar practice sufficiently. Nigeria Primary English - Primary English, on the other hand, treats grammar, the simple past tense, in the old-fashioned direct way. The book does not favour the communicative language teaching approach; no opportunity for learners to notice and discover grammar rules for themselves, and the book lacks the potency to promote creative grammar practice. The research and its findings, therefore, underscore the need to improve grammar contents and increase grammar activity types which engage learners effectively and promote sufficient creative grammar practice in EFL and ESL material design and development.

Keywords : evaluation, activity, second language, activity-types, creative grammar practice

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